

Sage Abra
Sage FAS

Sage MAS 500
Sage TimeSheet

Customer Success

Sierra Tel Connects Mountain Communities to the World With Sage

Across the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada mountain range, Sierra Tel Nevada mountain range, Sierra Tel Communications Group provides landline telephone, cellular, and Internet services to several counties. Based in Oakhurst, the southern gate to Yosemite National Park, Sierra Tel has been in business since 1895, and is still owned by a single family. The company prides itself on being "your connection to the world."

Even a predominantly rural Telco provider, however, is impacted by industry changes. For instance, the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 required that everyone in the United States be provided with broadband services, no matter where they lived. Small companies like Sierra Tel had to expand, and also provide the government with detailed records proving that their services were on a par with large urban areas. Suddenly, formal record keeping became of paramount importance.

Golden Idea

"We started out with Sage MAS 500 ERP, plus a third-party asset management package designed for independent telecoms," explains Anne Miller, accounting manager. "The asset management package presented information in the manner required by regulatory agencies, but the volume of our business was too large for it. Overall, it just wasn't a good fit."

By good fortune, Miller and Sierra's senior accountant attended a conference for Sage users, and saw a presentation on Sage FAS Fixed Assets. The products' capabilities regarding fixed asset management, depreciation, and construction in progress made them excited.

"We realized that Sage offered a totally integrated solution, giving us the control and flexibility we'd been lacking," says Miller. "Anyone in accounting knows what a solid system Sage MAS 500 is. So we were very comfortable expanding with other Sage products. We went home and transformed our systems."

Smart Integration

Sierra Tel now uses Sage MAS 500 as its underlying business system to handle all accounting functions. Payroll is produced in Sage Abra HRMS, with direct data feeds from Sage TimeSheet. Payroll information automatically flows back into Sage MAS 500, for posting to the general ledger. Allocations capabilities assign labor charges to various departments, as required by law.

"The speed we can achieve with Sage is fantastic," notes Miller. "Reports that used to take an hour and a half to print can now be produced immediately."



CUSTOMER

Sierra Tel Communications Group Inc.

INDUSTRY

Telecommunications

LOCATION

Oakhurst, California

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS

Four

NUMBER OF USERS

50

SAGE PRODUCTS

- Sage MAS 500
 - Accounts Payable
 - Accounts Receivable
 - Cash Management
 - General Ledger
 - Inventory Management
 - Purchase Order
 - Sales Order
- Sage FAS Fixed Assets
 - FAS 500 Fixed Assets
 - FAS 500 CIP Accounting
- Sage Abra HRMS
 - Abra Payroll
- Sage TimeSheet

CHALLENGE

Legacy systems were designed for smaller telecoms, were unstable for a growing firm, provided inadequate reporting, and generally didn't work

SOLUTION

Completely integrated suite of Sage products, including Sage MAS 500 as business platform, Sage Abra for payroll, Sage FAS for fixed asset management, and Sage TimeSheet for time and project tracking

RESULTS

Reports that once took 1.5 hours are now produced in seconds; software is saving more than a month of work on annual plant audit; detailed tracking now possible for employee hours and assets

Awesome Fixed Asset Management

Sage FAS manages more than \$125 million worth of assets in Sierra Tel's landline business, plus another \$16 million in cellular assets. Fixed assets are known as "plant" in the Telco industry, and include switches, installed cable, equipment for both cellular and landline services, cell towers, computers, vehicles, and buildings.

"Tracking plant work in progress is one of the most essential things we do. Before, we maintained more than 10,000 lines of information manually on spreadsheets," notes Miller. "Now we use FAS 500 CIP Accounting to document all costs for construction in process. We can record multiple levels of detail, and track numerous projects at once. Once a project is finished, the system instantly transfers both material and labor costs to FAS 500 Asset Accounting as plant. This saves an enormous amount of work."

Easier Audits and Forms

Prior to implementing Sage, Sierra Tel prepared for audits manually. "At the end of last year, we had 250 open work orders, and had to pull data by hand for the auditors," Miller explains. "With Sage FAS, we have this data automatically in a readable format. The software will save our plant accountant an entire month of work each year, and free up about half of her time the rest of the year for other tasks. This alone is worth the price of the software."

Payroll data has improved too. "Our IT people worked with Sage TimeSheet to create a workflow chart," says Miller. "This allows us to track employees' hours all the way back to their timesheet, for better allocation of labor. As a result, we finally have stable and accurate payroll information."

Sierra Tel saved more time using Sage Abra HRMS for producing payroll-related documents. "We prepare more than 500 different items between W2s and 1099 forms, and always had problems getting the numbers right before," Miller says. "So we had to proof everything manually. With Sage Abra, our forms were all correct, saving me about a month of work."

Miller is glad that Sierra Tel made the move to Sage. "I'm really pleased we have a system that gives us the information we want," she says. "It no longer requires a rocket scientist to run our business."

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Anne Miller
Accounting Manager
Sierra Tel Communications Group Inc.

About Sage

Sage North America is part of The Sage Group plc, a leading global supplier of business management software and services. At Sage, we live and breathe business every day. We are passionate about helping our customers achieve their ambitions. Our range of business software and services is continually evolving as we innovate to answer our customers' needs. Our solutions support accounting, operations, customer relationship management, human resources, time tracking, merchant services, and the specialized needs of the construction, distribution, healthcare, manufacturing, nonprofit, and real estate industries. Sage North America employs more than 5,000 people and supports nearly 2.9 million small and medium-size business customers.

The Sage Group plc, formed in 1981, was floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1989 and now employs 14,800 people and supports 5.7 million customers worldwide. For more information, please visit the Web site at www.sagenorthamerica.com or call **866-308-2378**.